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CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

The CIA's new priorities

Joseph C. Harsch

The new management at the Central Intelligence Agency in Washington is firing spies but hiring intelligence analysts. This is one of those milestones in history which tell of important changes in the American role in the world.

From January of 1953, when the Dulles brothers (John Foster at State and Allen at CIA) took over the management of American foreign policy, down to March of 1973 (when the last American combat troops left Vietnam) the emphasis at CIA was on clandestine operations against communist movements and governments. Secretary Dulles at the State Department used to talk about "giving them some homework to do," by which he meant that his brother Allen at CIA would turn his secret operations agents loose inside the communist countries and try to give them so much trouble at home that they would have less energy left for operations against the United States and its allies.

That assertive period in American clandestine activities opened with two spectacular successes which contributed to the prestige of the CIA in general and of the clandestine side of that organization in particular.

One of Allen Dulles's first acts as director of CIA was to send a clandestine agent in to Iran where a politician named Mohammed Mossadegh had overthrown the Shah's government and was running a Moscow-oriented dictatorship. The agent hired some street demonstrators, trained a few Iranian air force officers in how to take over the local radio station, and organized a coup d'etat. On Aug. 19, Mr. Mossadegh's regime was toppled, the Shah was brought home from exile, and Iran has ever since been a loyal and prospering client of the United States. The cost in dollars was negligible.

In May of the next year the CIA learned of a shipload of Czech weapons on its way to Guatemala for the benefit of that country's leftist-inclined President, Arbenz Guzman. The CIA was authorized to back a rival Guatemalan politician named Castillo Armas. Mr. Armas was in neighboring Nicaragua from whence he launched a small invasion of Guatemala. The CIA backed the invaders with three P-47 fighter planes left over from World War II with American pilots they recruited for the purpose.

Those three planes with their three pilots made up the CIA's first clandestine military force. It was a startling success. The planes

routed Senor Guzman's army. Senor Armas became the new President of Guatemala and Guatemala has been a loyal client of the United States ever since.

From that moment on White House and State Department thought of CIA as the place where miracles could be organized on order overnight. The clandestine operations side was loaded with one new task after another. Its secret armies expanded from those three planes to thousands of men. A Chinese anticommunist army was maintained for years in northern Burma. It was supplied and reinforced from Taiwan by a CIA transport air line. All over the world big CIA offices were opened under the "cover" of any and every type of business. CIA "operations" became big business in themselves and the Directorate of Operations at CIA became the tail that wagged the dog. The gathering and analysis of intelligence continued, but was treated as the poor relation of the glamorous "ops" side of CIA.

But, alas for the CIA, there was never again any success as spectacular, easy, and cheap as the overthrowing of Mossadegh or Guzman. A major effort was made in 1958 to organize a revolution in Indonesia against President Sukarno. It was an ignominious failure. An even larger effort was under way against Fidel Castro in Cuba in 1961 when John F. Kennedy took over the White House from President Eisenhower. That ended in the bloody fiasco of the Bay of Pigs.

The CIA's biggest secret armies ever were organized in the jungles of northern Laos during the Vietnam war. But that is all over and finished now. Some 800 "operatives" came home to the CIA's mini-Pentagon at Langley, Virginia. Last month the Office of Management and Budget ordered new CIA boss Adm. Stansfield Turner to trim his covert staff by 820 persons. That operation is under way.

This will not end CIA clandestine activities. There will still be CIA "station chiefs" in most capitals of the world. The number of secret agents will remain around the 4,000 figure. But they are not likely to be running secret armies, or organizing revolutions or trying to assassinate unfriendly heads of state, certainly not soon again or in any big way. Their main assignment will be in collecting intelligence. The main thrust of CIA activities from now on will be in arriving at sound estimates of the condition and intentions of other countries. The Howard Hunts are being phased out. Their time has gone by.


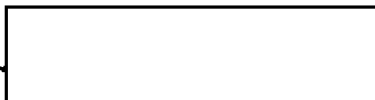
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23 November 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR: NIO/Strategic Programs

FROM: Director of Central Intelligence

1. Good work at the NFIB yesterday. I thought it went very well and we have accomplished a lot. Clearly, the soundness of your and your team's work has carried the day.
2. As I see the next step in this process, it is for me, in my next meeting with Harold Brown on 1 December, to take him just that section of the study that explains our reliance on the different static and quasi-dynamic indicators and the charts. I'll need four copies for this discussion.
3. I think I should also give two copies to Aaron and Brzezinski, and you should give a copy to whoever is working the problem for them. The sooner on these latter ones, the better.

 
STANSFIELD TURNER

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cc: D/DCI/NI

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